

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF
SUNDANCE RANCH
NORTHERN BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS**

By

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ABSTRACT

Abasolo Archaeological Consultants conducted a Phase I archaeological survey of the high probability areas for archaeological sites at the Sundance Ranch Development in northern Bexar County, Texas. The survey was to insure that no archaeological or historical resources eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places are damaged or destroyed due to the planned construction. Three historic sites were recorded, two were historic house sites and one is a historic one-lane stone bridge over Pecan Creek, a tributary of Leon Creek. Our recommendations are that the chimney and environs around Sundance Site #2 be protected, the historic bridge at Sundance #3 be preserved, and more documentation for the stacked rock fences and Sundance #2 and 3.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Abasolo Archaeological Consultants (AAC) conducted a Phase I pedestrian archaeological survey in the high probability areas for archaeological sites at the Sundance Ranch Development in northern Bexar County, Texas. The work was performed by the authors and Brian Culver of Frost GeoSciences on June 26, 2007. The field work was carried out to insure that no archaeological or historical resources eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places are damaged or destroyed due to the planned construction. This Phase I investigation was designed to detect and record any archaeological or historical component that may be present in the project area. Another inspection trip was made on July 19, 2007 by Shafer accompanied by Kay Hindes (COSA archaeologist), Steve Frost, Brian Culver (Frost GeoSciences), and Brian Birdwell (Holford Group Development) to examine the historic bridge (Sundance #3).

The Sundance Ranch development is in the Balcones Canyonlands and is drained by Pecan Creek, a tributary of Leon Creek (Figs. 1-4). The dominant geological formation is the Cretaceous Glen Rose formation (Fig. 4). Topography is hilly formed by the erosion of the Glen Rose that created the creek valley. Valley soils are Krum complex along the west side of the north-south trending creek and Lewisville silty clay (1 to 3 percent slope) on the east side of the creek. Upland soils are Tarrant association gently undulating and Brackett-Tarrant association hilly (Fig. 5) (Taylor et al., 1991).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Regional Culture History

The broad outline of the archaeology of northern Bexar County can be discerned. Major time periods and site types are briefly noted here.

The **Paleoindian** period, 9,200-6,800 B.C., has distinctive chipped stone spear points used in hunting mammoth and other late Ice Age mammals early in the period. Other spear types appear with a shift to bison, deer and other game after the Ice Age ended around 8000 B.C. (Hester 1986). Known site types in northern Bexar County are *campsites* with flint-chipping debris from stone-tool making and repair. One site of Clovis age (9,200 B.C.) was excavated near FM1604 and Leon Creek (Collins et al. 2003). A later site, dating around 7,500 B.C., was investigated on the grounds of St. Mary's Hall on Salado Creek (Hester 1986).

Sites of the following **Archaic** period are common in northern Bexar County. These peoples were hunters and gatherers as in the earlier Paleoindian period, but lived in an environment very similar to those of modern times. Projectile points used to tip spears (often erroneously called "arrowheads") change in shape through time, from 6,800 B.C. to 500 A.D. (Turner and Hester 1993). Archaeologists use these forms to recognize more specific time frames within the Archaic (e.g., Early, Middle and Late Archaic). In northern Bexar County, the most distinctive Archaic site is the *burned rock midden*.

These large accumulations of fire-cracked limestone result from the use of earth-oven cooking starting around 3,000 B.C. (Black et al. 1997; Nickels et al. 2000) Such features were part of *larger campsites*, with large amounts of flint debris from tool-making; sometimes, animal bone (dietary remains) and charcoal that can be used for radiocarbon dating. Other Archaic site types include *lithic procurement* areas (where flint cobbles eroded out of the Edwards limestone and were processed), *lithic scatters* (lightly-used areas probably representing short-term hunting and gathering activities), and rarely, *sinkhole burials* (Archaic peoples often disposed of their dead by placing them in sinkholes and caverns; Bement 1994).

By 700 A.D., there began to be some changes in the long hunter-gatherer life way. The **Late Prehistoric** is first seen with the introduction of the bow and arrow. The stone arrow points are very small (mistakenly called “bird points”), but could be used in hunting game of any size. By 1300 A.D., the economy emphasized buffalo-hunting. Most sites of this era include *campsites*, often in areas previously used by Archaic peoples, *lithic scatters* of this age; and the *lithic procurement areas* of earlier times continued to be used.

During the **Historic** period, the best known archaeological remains are *ranch and farm houses of cut stone*, dating from the 1840s through the 1880s. Stacked- stone fences also occur. Such sites, including those without surviving structures, are recognized from 19th century pottery fragments, artifacts of glass and metal, etc. Later Historic houses and farmsteads, through the early 1900s, are also found.

Nearby Sites

The upper portion of the Leon Creek Valley is poorly known archaeologically. Indeed the northwest corner of Bexar County, around the Sundance Ranch Development, has had practically no archaeological work. To the north two historic sites, the Obert House (41BX497) and Obert Cemetery (41BX498) are located to the northwest of the project area, within the Maverick-Altgelt Ranch National Register District. To the south are sites 41BX84 and 41BX85, recorded by the Leon Creek survey carried out in the early 1970s by Paul McGuff and William Fawcett (Texas Archeological Site Atlas, Texas Historical Commission). 41BX84 is at the confluence of Pecan Creek (which runs through Sundance Ranch) and Leon Creek. Perdiz (?) and Fairland points were found at this bluff-top site. Nearby is 41BX85, an open campsite also on a Leon Creek bluff. It probably dates to the Middle Archaic.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Detailed historical research was not within the scope of this project. Fortunately, several informants provided some background important to the historical features (Sundance #2; rock fences) noted in our report. There was a stone house on the property (Sundance #1) which had been demolished at the time of our survey; road construction had obliterated all traces except for scattered historic-era artifacts. The home was built by William Hausmann, who had come from Germany to Bexar County around 1854. Deed records

refer to much of the present Sundance Ranch as the Hausmann Ranch. Bexar County Appraisal District records list an 1865 house, with 525 square feet, and valued at \$15,000.

However, Hausmann and a partner, William Heidemann (also from Prussia) jointly purchased, in 1856, 320 acres in what is now Sundance Ranch area. The land was owned, at the time of this sale, by Benjamin R. Sappington, originally from Tennessee. It was operated by both Hausmann and Heidemann as a ranch until sometime in the 1870s. The extensive rock (stacked stone) fences found on the ranch were constructed prior to the introduction of barbed wire in the San Antonio area, and probably date 1857-1870s.

Both the Hausmann and Heidemann families are listed in the United State Census for Bexar County in 1870. William Hausmann died in the 1870s, and his widow later sued William Heidemann, successfully partitioning the land.

Although much more historical research is needed, it is likely that Sundance #2 represents a structure built by William Heidemann as part of the ranching operations with Hausmann. It is 0.16 miles southeast of the Hausmann stone house, associated with a long straight rock fence, decoratively topped with vertical stones.

William Heidemann died around 1891 and is buried in the Heidemann Cemetery, about a half-mile northwest of the Sundance Ranch tract, on the north side of Toutant Beauregard Ranch. Although the grave marker at the cemetery has no birth or death dates for Heidemann, it is known that he was born in 1825, and died at the age of 66 (1891).

SURVEY RESULTS

The survey identified three archaeological sites (Fig. 6), all historic in nature. The setting and environment are conducive to finding prehistoric sites, particularly burned rock middens and burned rock scatters usually associated with the outskirts of the middens. However, we did not find any such features or identify. Fire-cracked limestone was observed on the east side of the creek, along the creek on the west side near Toutant Beauregard Road, and also on the slopes west of the creek. Some of the fire-cracked rock was probably cultural in nature and some may have been due to brush and grass fires, and land clearing. The only chipped stone artifacts were three pieces of chert (flint) and a possible limestone hammerstone/mano (Fig. 27) on the east side of the creek in the Lewisville soils association. Perhaps the absence of flowing springs and exposures of natural chert may have contributed to the absence of prehistoric sites. Descriptions of the historic sites are provided below.

Sundance #1 Hausmann House Site

This site was the location of a 19th century farmstead constructed about 1856 that has since been razed (Fig. 7-9). Road cuts have destroyed most of the site and all that remained at the time of the survey as an artifact scatter and a cistern (Figs 9). The GPS

location for the cistern is 0529274E/3282893N. The house site area covered an area of about 100 meters north-south and 50 meters east-west. It is associated with a complex of historic stacked stone fences that suggest pens and pasture definition (see Fig. 13). The cistern opening was covered with a protective grate at the time of our survey (Fig. 9).

As noted in the Historical Background section above, the home was built by William Hausmann came from Germany to Bexar County around 1854 and settled in northern Bexar County. According to Bexar County Appraisal District records for 1865 the house had 525 square feet. No images of the house were available to the authors although the house is shown on aerial photographs made in 2004 (inside oval denoting Site #1 in Fig. 5).

Intensive artifact search was not conducted in part due to heavy vegetation cover although casual pedestrian survey did observe the following artifacts, a selected example of which are shown in Figures 10-12.

1 plate sherd of Gladden Bean Co., Franciscan Del Mar china that dates to 1957
(<http://www.hillhousewares.com/category0maker0pattern16.html>)

2 sherds of a transfer print that probably date from late 19th to mid 20th century

1 glass bottle neck that had a cork closures held with the toggle held by a wire. This type of bottle neck probably dates to the early 20th century (<http://www.sha.org/bottle/dating.htm>)

1 body sherd aqua glass from a mold blown bottle. The mold seam and two letters "BR" are distinguishable (Fig.). This type of bottle could date from 1850-1870
(<http://www.sha.org/bottle/index.htm>.)

1 sherd fine paste orange earthenware

5 sherds hand-thrown glazed earthenware (from crocks or jugs)

6 sherds plain white stoneware

1 sherd of porcelain

2 sherds of china

3 sherds pressed glass, 2 clear, 1 brown

3 sherds thick blue-green glass

10 sherds misc. glass and bottle sherds

1 wrought iron hinge strap (Fig. 10).

1 square nail (late 19th century)

1 metal fastener/buckle element

This small collection was revealing in that trash around the house can be dated from the mid 19th century to the mid 1950s. Since artifacts dating to the mid 19th century are

expected in the environs around the site, the date range is in keeping with the historic records for the structure and occupancy.

Rock Fences

Extensive well-made rock fences are associated with the Hausmann Ranch complex. Some of these are identified in Figure 13 and shown in Figures 14-16 and 21. These fences are still substantial and are sufficiently preserved to provide barriers for livestock in places. Some segments of fence in proximity to Sundance #2 are embellished by vertical placement of fence stones as the top row of the fence (Fig. 21). While it would be desirable to preserve all of these historic fences, we recommend that at least some segments, or sections, be more precisely mapped and preserved. Those that are remarkably preserved and topped off with decorative stonework should be kept intact and integrated into landscaping for the homes. The COSA should investigate the potential of such fence sections as to their eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. For example, have any of the stone fences of mid-19th century Bexar County been preserved during the wide scale development of the area in recent years? Knott (2004a, 2004b, 2005) has studied such fences in central Texas, especially in Blanco County.

Sundance #2

This is another historic house site. It consists of a standing rock chimney a razed board and batten house (Fig. 17, 18), and a partly standing shed. No details are available for the house. All nails were round suggesting the structure dates after 1892, or at least not earlier than about the turn of the 20th century. The GPS location for the house is 0529409E/3282785N. The artifact scatter around the house was meager and yielded no historic items that could be dated with precision. Tin cans and window glass sherds dominated the observed assemblage. The edge of an adjacent small drainage had been carefully terraced with native stone on the east side of the house. (Fig. 19). Also, there was a loose enclosure of stone, perhaps a religious shrine (Fig. 20) northeast of the house. The top of the stacked stone fence that partly defines the house grounds was also embellished with vertically stacked stones (Fig. 21). The stone chimney appears to date well before the construction of the board and batten, which likely replaced an earlier wood or stone house.

This may be the house of William Heidemann, a ranch partner to William Hausmann. The locale should be fully documented, with measurements of the fireplace and chimney. As the only remaining historic structure on the development, it may be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places if it is associated with any of the families noted above.

Sundance #3

This historic structure is a narrow, one-lane bridge constructed over Pecan Creek (Figs. 22-24). The bridge is about 88 feet long, 16 feet wide, and stands about 10 feet high at the center of the creek. The GPS location is 0529707E/3283012N. The bridge is part of

an abandoned road that once led to two ranches to the south. What is interesting about the bridge is the architecture. Two masonry arches provide water passage and the bridge is embellished with a series of pointed rocks lining each side. The stones are native limestone and the mortar is Portland cement.

A nicely constructed stairway extends from the south end on the east side down to the water, perhaps to provide access for radiator water. While the architecture mimics the Espada Acequia bridge in San Antonio (Fig. 25), it was clearly constructed much later, probably about the 1920s or 30s, or during the time when small automobiles such as the Model A and Model T Fords were in use. There is lettering on the west side in the mid point of the bridge, but we have yet to make sense of it (Fig. 26). The lettering may refer to the date the bridge was constructed. Further investigations may be useful in providing a clearer perspective of the lettering.

It is our recommendation that the bridge be preserved and restored. Recent flooding over the bridge has damaged the bridge slightly by removing some of the stones along the side, and creating a deep erosion gully on the south side near the north end. The gully needs to be filled in to stabilize the bridge and some additional masonry work will be needed to further stabilize the structure and to repair the flood damage.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

No prehistoric sites were found, while three historic sites, two former house sites and a stone bridge were recorded along with associated rock (stacked stone) fences. ACC assessment and recommendations are as follows:

1. Sundance #1 no longer exists; it was razed and the grounds largely destroyed by road development. No further work is recommended.
2. Sundance #2 is in ruins, although its stone fireplace and chimney remain intact, along with landscape features adjacent to it. Additional historical research is recommended for Sundance #2 to see if the builder or owner of this house can be identified. We have guessed here that the house is linked to William Heidemann. It would also be important to document some significant segments of the rock fences. There are some notable sections with decorative vertical-stone top rows. These fences are clearly linked to the Hausmann-Heidemann ranching operation at this locale from 1856 until the 1870s.
3. We recommend that the stone fences associated with the Hausmann-Heidemann ranch be preserved where possible and that fence segments be landscaped into house lots. Stones removed from fences should be

salvaged and incorporated into new stone structures associated with the Sundance Development.

4. Sundance #3 is a small stone bridge over Pecan Creek that should be preserved and stabilized. Historical research should be undertaken to determine the age of the bridge, which appears to have been on an old north-south road connecting two ranches in the area.

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Sundance Figures



Figure 1. Aerial view of the Sundance development. Image provided by Frost GeoSciences.



Figure 2. View of upland slope west of Pecan Creek.



Figure 3. Rock overhang at the head of a small western drainage into Pecan Creek. No evidence of human occupation was present.



Figure 4. Geological map of the area of Sundance Development. Map provided by Frost GeoSciences.

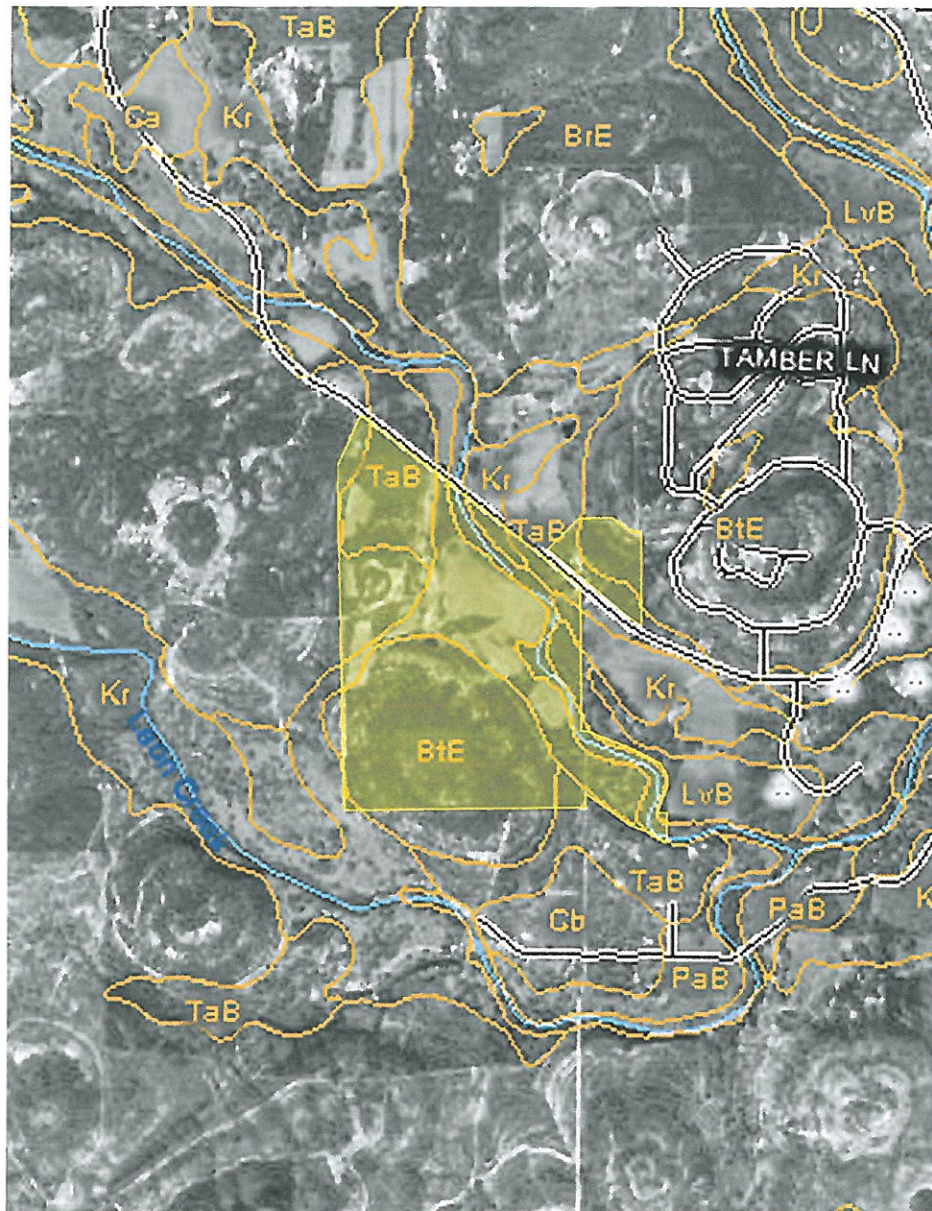


Figure 5. Soils map of the area of Sundance development. Map provided by Frost GeoSciences.



Figure 6. Aerial view of property showing site locations (red circles and rectangle).



Figure 7. Road cut and conditions at Sundance #1, the former location of the historic Hausmann house.



Figure 8. Road cut at Sundance #1 showing the typical profile of Brackett-Tarrant soils. Historic trash is buried just beneath the grass.



Figure 9. Cistern at Sundance #1, historic Hausmann homestead site.



Figure 10. Wrought iron strap hinge associated with the William Hausmann homestead.



Figure 11. Historic artifacts from the historic Hausmann house complex at Sundance #3. A, china with maker's mark (see Fig. 10), B, transfer ware, C, whiteware cup handle; E, mold-blown jar sherd, F, thick glass sherd, G, hand-thrown glazed earthenware; H, square nail; I, fastener.

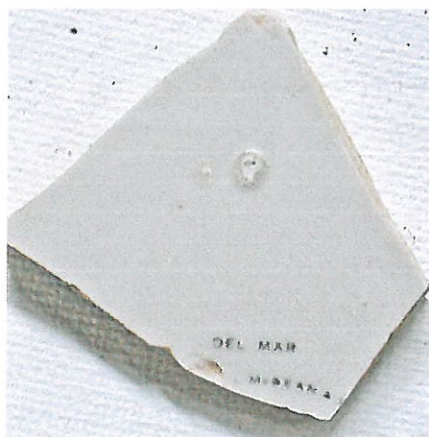


Figure 12. Close-up of makers mark on the Gladden McBean & Company china plate fragment.

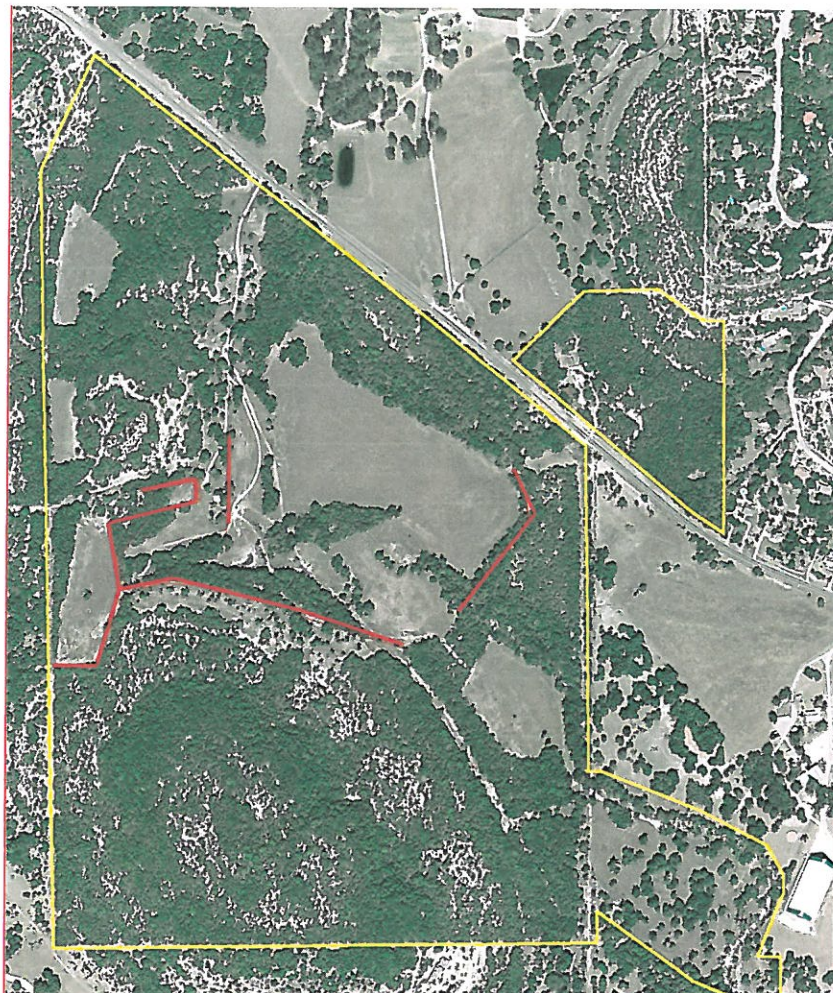


Figure 13. Map showing rock fences at the historic Hausmann place at Sundance #1.



Figure 14. Part of rock fence east of the historic Hausmann house at Sundance #1.



Figure 15. Rock fences west of Sundance sites #1 and 2.



Figure 16. Gate in rock fences west of Sundance #1 and 2. This complex of rock fences is very well preserved.



Figure 17. View from the east of the stone chimney and razed house structure at Sundance #2.



Figure 18. View of stone chimney from the west at Sundance #2



Figure 19. Stone terrace feature at Sundance #2.



Figure 20. Stone feature at Sundance #2.

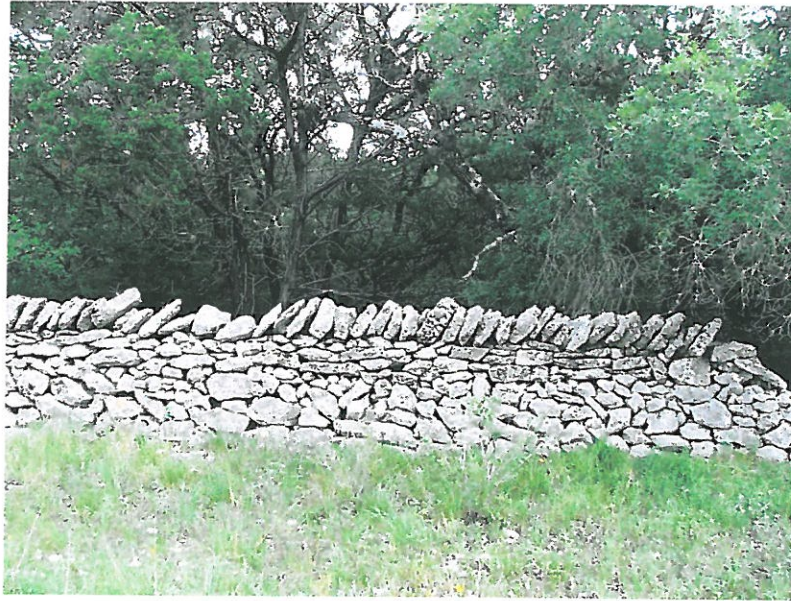


Figure 21. Embellished stacked rock fence at Sundance #2.



Figure 22. Stone bridge across Pecan Creek at Sundance #3



Figure 23. North side of the stone bridge at Sundance #3.



Figure 24. View of the south side of the bridge with scale at Sundance #3.

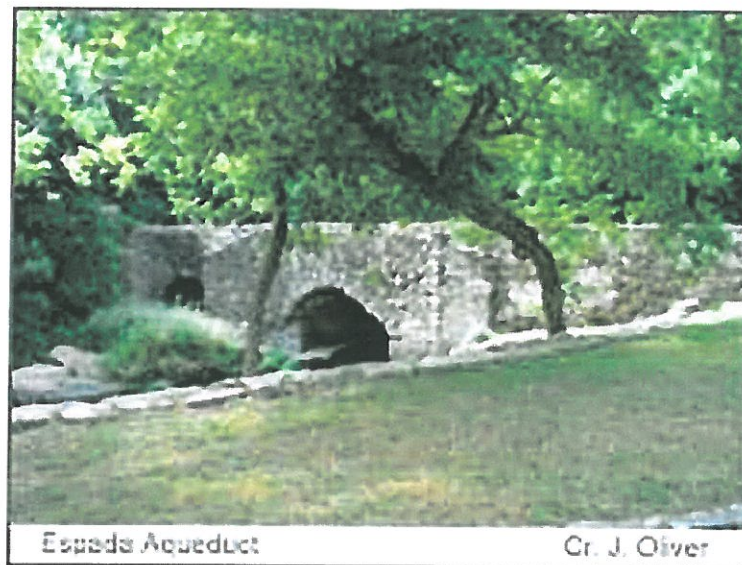


Figure 25. The Espada Acquia, San Antonio
 (<http://tps.cr.nps.gov/nhl/detail.cfm?ResourceId=618&ResourceType=Structure>)



Figure 26. Un-deciphered lettering in the center of the north edge of the bridge at Sundance #3.



Figure 27. Possible prehistoric mano/hammerstone observed in the Lewisville association soils east of Pecan Creek.